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THE CAUSES OF EARLIER EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

The history of immigration to the United States since official statistics began to be kept may be divided into two periods. Though it is impossible—and, indeed, unnecessary—to draw the line between them in any particular year, yet the decade 1870 to 1880 saw the end of one and the beginning of the other. The two periods differ from each other in the volume of immigration, in the races mainly contributing to it, in the attitude of the American government and public opinion toward it, in the conditions of transportation, and in the causes that promoted it.

It would be impossible to enumerate all the causes that induce men to leave old homes for new. Sometimes it is a mere spirit of adventure, a love of change. Very often the reasons are personal; sometimes they are involved and complicated, and however strongly felt, are but vaguely understood even by those that move under their influence. Whatever weakens the ties of home—bereavement, altered surroundings, domestic infelicity, social or political disappointment, economic difficulties, in short, any one of many things that may darken the current of life—urges men to a change of habitation. At the present day when the means of transportation have become cheap, quick, and secure the motives for emigration need not be so strong as was necessary to induce men to leave Europe for America in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century.

The general causes for immigration during the period from 1820 to about 1875 naturally fall into two groups: those that repelled from the mother country and those that attracted to the United States. In studying the first group it is mainly the influences operating in Germany, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom that need detain us, for during that period they contributed the overwhelming majority of the immigrants to this country. The relatively small numbers that came from the other nations

of Europe usually left their homes for personal reasons or for reasons that were temporary and very limited in the range of their influence.

Political and religious discontent, prominent among the causes of emigration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, did not cease to operate during the nineteenth. In South Germany it strongly influenced the renewal of emigration after the Napoleonic wars.¹ During the following decade thousands were driven from Wurtemburg, Hesse, and the Palatinate by dissatisfaction with the system of taxation and the forest laws.² In Mecklenburg, where the condition of the peasants was little better than serfdom, the dim prospect of political reform and of improvement in their civil and social position induced them to lend a willing ear to the blandishments of the emigration agents, and the men from that region formed one of the strongest elements of German emigration in the thirties.³ From England emigration for political reasons was at no time great in the nineteenth century, and ceased altogether after the passage of the Reform Bill; whereas the revolutionary movement of 1830, which was suppressed with a heavy hand in various German states, was followed by the departure of large numbers of people, particularly in the years 1834 to 1837, when the reaction was most extreme and political oppression harshest.⁴ In the early forties the changes in the established church of Prussia drove many of the Old Lutherans to America;⁵ while at a later date the rigor of the law in Sweden against those that abandoned Lutheranism was responsible for a part of the emigration from that country.⁶ In the late forties political causes account for the emigration of a comparatively small, but interesting and thrifty, body of Hollanders to Iowa and to Grand Rapids, Mich.⁷ The failure of the attempts at revolution in Germany in 1848

¹ Lehmann, *Die deutsche Auswanderung*, p. 22.

² Brauns, *Amerika und die moderne Völkerwanderung*, p. 265.

³ Lehmann, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵ Niles' *Register*, LXII, 256.

⁶ Chandèze, *De l'intervention des pouvoirs publics dans l'émigration*, etc., p. 54.

⁷ Niles' *Register*, LXXIII, 48, 161.

and Napoleon's *coup d'état* in 1851 ended for a time the struggle in Europe against monarchical institutions, and the following years witnessed a great increase in the volume of emigration. During the whole period the Irish Catholics were suffering all the disabilities of a conquered race, subject to foreign land proprietors and harassed by the upholders of a foreign religion;⁸ and the agitation of religious and political leaders strongly combined with economic causes to promote their departure for America.⁹ Toward the end of the period the political results of the Prussian wars against Denmark and Austria, and the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine to the German empire, all contributed to swell the number of political emigrants to the United States.

Strong, however, as was the influence of religious and political discontent, a much greater importance attaches to the economic motives for European emigration.

During a large part of the nineteenth century the lower classes of the population in Ireland and in many of the German states were living continually on the verge of starvation. Bad governments, pernicious legislation, the survival of mediaeval institutions, the unawakened energy of the people, their ignorance of modern methods of production, and their lack of the material means necessary to learn and to apply them had reduced the laboring classes to a condition that vividly illustrated the principles underlying the theory then current of an "iron law of wages." A long period of peace, a succession of good harvests, a reduction in the cost of the necessities of life, were quickly followed by an increase in population; and the "standard of living" remained so near the "minimum of existence" that a serious business depression or a few years of poor crops brought acute suffering and even famine. Thus the destruction of the crops by an overflow of the Rhine in 1825 in the duchy of Baden reduced scores of families to such misery that they were forced to emigrate to escape starvation.¹⁰ In the following year the scarcity of food in Ireland approached famine conditions,

⁸ *Spectator*, October 18, 1851.

⁹ *London Morning Chronicle*, November 12, 1850.

¹⁰ Brauns, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

and accounts for the first great wave of Irish emigration to America. The results of the potato rot in that country in 1846 and 1847 are notorious. We have the authority of Francis Lieber for the statement that at that time the suffering in Germany from the same cause was well-nigh as great as in Ireland.¹¹ The misery of those years showed the depressed state of the people in both countries and the narrow margin by which they were separated from starvation.

The contemporary English press deplored the condition of the Irish people that was revealed by the famine and attributed it to a lack of capital for developing the resources of the country and giving employment to the workers.¹² A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1851 says that the same lack of capital and of an active and energetic middle class to stimulate industry and employ labor, which caused the Irish to emigrate, existed in Germany, and was attended by the same result. In the generation of peace, he continues, following the overthrow of Napoleon, there was a disproportion between the birth-rate and the increase in the production of wealth, and both countries suffered the evils attributable to overpopulation. This is a naïve statement of actual facts. But it does not tell the whole truth; for during the generation it refers to we had been receiving a large immigration from England, the home of capital and the leading industrial nation of the world; a nation, at the same time, where urban squalor, factory riots, and widespread destitution, and the excessive rates of taxation for poor-relief, revealed in exaggerated form many of the evils attributed in the other countries to overpopulation. The truth is that in all three countries these evils were due in larger measure to the unequal, not to say inequitable, distribution of the national product than to the inadequacy of that product to support a growing population. When legislation is so shaped or industry is so organized that a small class gets possession of the lion's share of the wealth produced, it makes little difference whether capital is abundant or not, and whether the national resources are fully developed

¹¹ *Niles' Register*, LXII, 392.

¹² See *London Morning Chronicle*, November 12, 1850; *London Times*, September 24, and October 23, 1851; *Spectator*, October 18, 1851, etc.

or not: the result to those that do not share the product will be the same. This was the situation in England in the first few generations of her industrial expansion, when enterprise was unregulated and the exploitation of laborers unchecked. It was likewise the situation in Ireland and Germany, where, in addition to the fact that commerce and industry were backward, the agricultural producers were deprived by still surviving mediaeval institutions of the greater part of the fruits of their toil. Except in Ireland and perhaps in Scandinavia, where the climate is hard and the land is poor, there is no country in Europe where during the nineteenth century the growth of wealth did not keep pace with the growth of population.¹³ But in the first half of the century the increase of product did not accrue in favorable proportion to the interest of the different classes of the people.

A comparison of conditions in Germany and Great Britain with that then prevailing in France will perhaps show the truth more clearly. The question as to why French emigration has been small throughout the nineteenth century is still commonly regarded as unsettled. Some peculiarity of French character; an unparalleled love of home and country; the influence of the Civil Code and especially of the provision for an equal division of land among heirs; the fact that the absolute necessities of life may be obtained without great difficulty, have been suggested in explanation by various writers. Doubtless all these things have been of influence. But the full and sufficient explanation should include a statement of the absence of the economic motive for emigration that was so strongly felt in the other countries mentioned above. For nowhere was political and religious discontent stronger than in France at various epochs during the nineteenth century; her natural resources were not greater, nor her people more willing to labor, than those of southern Germany, and in 1847 she suffered a scarcity almost as great as that of her neighbors;¹⁴ she enjoyed neither the industrial development nor the accumulation of capital possessed by England. But the passing of the old régime had left a clear field and almost

¹³ Cf. Chandèze, *op. cit.*, p. 54; and Philippovich, in *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, II 72.

¹⁴ *Niles' Register*, LXII, 64.

equal opportunity for men of all classes; the "legitimate" monarchy with its attempts at reaction was an anachronism soon abolished; the *burgeoisie* on its accession to power did not succeed in establishing permanent legal institutions and methods of business organization for the exploitation of other classes; the national product, therefore, though destined long to remain smaller in proportion to population than that of England, was so distributed as to cause no serious discontent. In consequence the French did not seek some other land of fairer economic promise. They realized, however, that the standard of living depended under normal conditions of wealth-distribution on the ratio of population to production, and they learned how to keep this ratio favorable. Indeed, they learned the lesson all too well. Small families, which seem in the first half of the nineteenth century to have been a necessary alternative to emigration, if the standard of living was to be preserved, having once obtained the sanction of public opinion and become a social custom, did not give place to large families when the growth of industry and commerce made it possible for France to support a much larger population. The situation that has developed from this fact is interesting and important, but it does not concern us here.

The naïve ascription of emigration from Europe to over-population won additional plausibility from the fact that the movement was strong in time of industrial depression, as in England in 1826, and diminished with industrial expansion and business prosperity or any increase in the field of employment for labor. Thus in Great Britain the falling off in emigration to America after 1854 was attributed to the demand for men to serve in the army and navy during the Russian War and the Indian Mutiny.¹⁵ That this was not the full explanation became clear when the movement was not resumed in its former strength after the wars were over. The truth is that the expansion of industry, the construction of railroads, the repeal of the Corn Laws, the new system of poor-relief, the revolution in tariff policy, the growth of parliamentary regulation of industry, the constitutional changes begun by the passage of the Reform Bill,

¹⁵ Eighth U.S. Census, "Population," p. xxv.

combined with other things to destroy the ancient privileges of certain classes and to afford a more nearly equal opportunity to all. Although the loss of privilege and special favor left a part of the protected classes helpless or discontented, and forced some of them to depart for America, as was the case with a considerable number of farmers on the repeal of the Corn Laws,¹⁶ yet these were few in comparison with those of other classes who were benefited by the reforms, and with whom the economic motive for emigration was removed.

While such influences were working to promote emigration from Europe, a second group of causes, the counterpart in the main of those operating abroad, was drawing men to the United States. Nowhere else did religious and civil freedom, accessibility, political security, and economic opportunity prevail to the same degree as in this country; and nowhere else were public opinion and government agencies more favorable to the coming of new settlers and more consistent and active in promoting it.

During the nineteenth century the absolute equality of all religions before the law was never in danger. It is true that for about a decade the Know Nothing movement, which involved a virulent agitation against the Roman Catholics, revealed that a portion of the American people cherished strong religious prejudices; but the movement was short-lived and futile, and the real motives of the great majority that took part in it were connected rather with local and party politics than with religion. The effect on religious life of the equal protection afforded by the laws of the land alike to unbelievers and to believers of all shades of opinion is not open to discussion in this connection. Suffice it to say that foreigners who took advantage of it had no cause to complain regarding its effectiveness; and that these were not few in number has been indicated above.

The ideals of political refugees were not so generally realized as were those of men who came for the sake of religion or for economic opportunity. Civil equality and political liberty were not widely understood on the continent of Europe two generations ago, and few foreigners knew the real nature of American

¹⁶ *Niles' Register*, LXII, 400; LXX, 288.

institutions and government. Many supposed that utopian schemes and arcadian conditions that were impossible of realization anywhere were already securely established in this free republic. They saw in America a land where their ideals could be and would be realized, and they outrivaled Americans in their laudation of republican institutions. By such men conditions and institutions in America were idealized and their perfection greatly overrated. Even in England there were families in which one generation transmitted to another admiration for the vigorous republic that had achieved its independence by force of arms, and had insured civil liberty by its written constitution;¹⁷ and they read into the history and laws of this country much that existed only in their own imagination. But it was particularly in Germany that members of the educated classes were wont to view American institutions through the medium of their emotions, whereas when they came to America they were forced to view them through the medium of the intelligence; and the resulting disappearance of the rose-colored halo fancy had placed around them led to bitter disappointment. It came to be said, therefore, that many vainly sought America in America.¹⁸ In Europe such men would not believe true accounts when made to them, and on reaching America they complained that true accounts had not been given. Disappointment frequently brought on a natural reaction; and undue admiration was changed to unreasoning dislike. Hence arose a common saying that if one is not contented with his native land he should be sent to America to be cured.¹⁹ Among the educated immigrants were many idealists and political dreamers, who came to America with groundless expectations. Some of them, as was the case with a few German students whose zeal outstripped their discretion in the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, ultimately became good citizens; but many of this class deteriorated, and were unable to adapt themselves to American life.²⁰ Others were wholly unde-

¹⁷ Fidler, *Observations on Professions, Literature, Manners, and Emigration in the United States*, etc., pp. 4 ff.

¹⁸ Büchele, *Land und Volk der Vereinigten Staaten*, etc., p. 404.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 405; Fidler, *passim*.

²⁰ Straten-Ponthoz, *Forschungen über die Lage der Auswanderer in den Vereinigten Staaten*, etc., p. 51.

sirable. The Germans in America suffered as a race from the outrageous doctrines promulgated by a few theorists among them.²¹ Many of the German newspapers in this country were edited by political refugees and visionaries, who filled them with extravagant, vile, or senseless doctrines about freedom, religion, and morality.²² Dr. C. Büchele, who traveled in the United States in the early fifties, found that the best men among the political refugees of 1848 and 1849 had quickly withdrawn into themselves, leaving the field to "screamers and gabblers," who brought all German immigrants into disrepute.²³ Fanatics also and political criminals sought in the United States not only escape from punishment, but even honor for deeds that, though done in the name of liberty, were as shocking to Americans as to Europeans. In the summer of 1849 some thirty or forty different men came to New York, each claiming to have been the principal actor in the murder of Lichnowsky and Auerswald!²⁴ Meunier and Quesnisset, who were condemned for attempted regicide in France, escaped to New Orleans. Quesnisset was actually naturalized, and voted in the presidential election of 1844.²⁵ A type of the incorrigible political agitator was a certain Heinzen, who effected his escape to New York after the Revolution of 1848. After martyring three struggling newspapers there with his anarchistic lucubrations, he was reduced to keeping a beershop; and as he could no longer get his distorted fancies printed, he laid them before his customers in manuscript.²⁶ The successful career achieved by a few illustrious individuals among the political refugees has obscured the fact that very many among this class were helpless and unfit for life in the New World. There were among them some that were able after a period of disappointment and hardship to adapt themselves to their environment and to contribute to the growth of American civilization. Especially their children, with inheritance and traditions of culture and refinement, formed an interesting and useful element

²¹ Stratens-Ponthoz, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

²² Büchele, *Land und Volk der Vereinigten Staaten*, pp. 176, 339.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 570.

²⁵ 34th Cong., 1st sess., *House Report* 359, p. 135.

²⁶ Büchele, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

of the American people. But few of the first generation were able to overcome a longing for their native land that made them hypercritical of the country that received them; still fewer were masters of a trade or able to do manual labor.²⁷ Destitute, disillusioned, and hopeless, they sent back reports of conditions in America that deterred from coming hither worthier members of the class to which they had once belonged. The impression they gave was reflected by Heine:

Manchmal kommt mir in den Sinn
Nach Amerika zu fahren,
Nach dem grossen Freiheitsstall
Der bewohnt von Gleichheits Flegeln.

Doch es ängstigt mich ein Land
Wo die Menschen Tabak kauen,
Wo sie ohne König kegeln,
Wo sie ohne Spucknapf speien.

While it is impossible to know even approximately how many persons sought a home in America for political reasons, it is safe to say that they were few as compared with the multitude that was attracted by the prospect of economic advantages.²⁸ The ease of getting land; the freedom of internal trade, industry, and intercourse; low taxes; the absence of a standing army; domestic and foreign peace; the certainty of constant employment for such as were able to labor; and the guaranty of equal civil rights to all, afforded opportunities that were to be found in no other country. To the masses of the people of Europe these advantages were summed up in the phrase, "cheap land and dear labor."²⁹ Tales of virgin soil in untold millions of acres that might be owned for a nominal price appealed as nothing else could do to peasants that eked out a narrow living on small holdings which produced little more than rent and taxes. Baron von Straten-Ponthoz, first secretary of the Belgian Legation in 1844, in his book on immigration, expressed the universal opinion of contemporaries that cheap and fertile land was the chief cause of

²⁷ Jörg, *Briefe aus America*, pp. 5 ff; Straten-Ponthoz, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

²⁸ Straten-Ponthoz, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

²⁹ Fröbel, *Die deutsche Auswanderung*, p. 46.

European emigration to America, and that stricter provisions for disposing of the public domain would quickly stem the tide.³⁰ In the clearness of its provisions, the mathematical exactness of its surveys, the security of title, and the low purchase price, the United States land system was without parallel in history.³¹ To Germans, Norwegians, and British, cheap land held out a strong inducement to emigrate. With the Irish it was different: experience with the impoverishing potato patch and a system of agriculture that exhibited the direst extreme of squalor and incompetence combined with other causes to turn them away from land and tillage.

For all working people, however, even if they were unwilling to go into agriculture, America was the land of promise. Industry and commerce were expanding at a rate hitherto unknown in the history of the modern world. The consequent demand for labor was out of all proportion to the supply of it. Alexander Hamilton's report in 1791 had predicted as to labor for our manufactures that "we should trade upon a foreign stock." This foreign stock was eagerly sought in subsequent generations, not only for manufactures but for all forms of productive work. Furthermore, foreign workmen were needed not merely as laborers but also as teachers and guides in many branches of industry that Americans did not know how to prosecute. Thus German locksmiths, imported for the purpose to New Britain, Conn., taught the workmen there better methods and processes.³² Englishmen from Sheffield and Birmingham were brought over to render a like service to the industries of Meriden, Conn.; as also were other foreigners to Steelton, Penn.,³³ and similar instances might be adduced in large number. Nearly half of the grown men who reached this country before 1870 were skilled workers of some sort,³⁴ and they commanded high wages and ready employment. This was not altogether due to their possession of technical skill, however, unless they came as teachers

³⁰ Straten-Ponthoz, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

³¹ Lehmann, *Die deutsche Auswanderung*, p. 79.

³² Immigration Commission, *Community Report on New Britain*, MS, p. 27.

³³ *Ibid.*, *Steelton Report*, MS, p. 99.

³⁴ Young, *Special Report on Immigration*, 1871, p. vii.

of some craft not yet developed here, but in at least equal degree to the general ability that the possession of skill implied. For the European artisan usually found that in America he had to learn his trade over again.³⁵ The methods and processes applied in this country, and especially the rate of working, were very different from what he had become familiar with at home.³⁶ The simple old-world tools, the slow and painstaking methods that sought to give perfection of detail and permanence of result, were out of place in a land where work was rushed to a "rough and ready" completion with a hurry and strain at which the European stood aghast. Many foreign mechanics who prospered here were forced to admit that if they had worked as hard and denied themselves as much at home as they were forced to do in America they would have been as well off where they came from.³⁷ It often happened that a trade learned in Europe could not be practiced here, for special knowledge and technical skill were not so important as a sound, quick, adaptable, and determined body and mind.³⁸ But the immigrant who possessed these qualities, though he belonged to the great class of common laborers on his arrival, not only found rough work well paid, but soon picked up a sufficient knowledge of some trade to raise himself in the industrial scale. Such was the case with many of the Irish in the New England cotton mills,³⁹ with the great majority of the foreign-born miners in the Pennsylvania anthracite-coal fields,⁴⁰ and with many others that might be mentioned. It was this that made America the land of hope for the toiling masses of the Old World. Men that came and prospered wrote back for their friends and kindred, and their letters were the most important and successful of all forms of immigration propaganda. Their persuasion was seconded by native land-owners and employers of labor, by the transportation companies, and by the state governments. Especially in the Northwest it was common for the states to make special appropriations to

³⁵ Immigration Commission, *Meriden Report*, MS. (Not paginated.)

³⁶ Fröbel, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

³⁷ Büchele, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

³⁸ Fröbel, *op. cit.*, pp. 15 ff.

³⁹ Miss Abbott, in *Journal of Political Economy*, XVI, *passim*.

⁴⁰ Immigration Commission, *Community Report on Shenandoah, Penn.*, MS, p. 75.

foster immigration, to provide for advertising in Europe the advantages they had to offer, and in various ways to assist and encourage foreign settlers.

Nor did the federal government fail to share in these fostering activities. Except for a brief time during the administration of John Adams, its attitude from its creation till 1868 was distinctly favorable to immigration. Here and there during the first generation of the republic a prominent man was found who spoke in general terms of the dangers that might arise from the indiscriminate admission of foreigners to citizenship. Jefferson, for example, in his *Notes on Virginia*, questioned the expediency of encouraging a large accession of alien settlers, on the ground that they would bring with them the principles of absolute monarchies, and would introduce into our simple communities the practices of "unbounded licentiousness." But such views had little or no effect on American legislation. The First Congress fixed the term of residence required for naturalization at only two years. It was extended to five years in 1795; and three years later the agitation arising out of our political relations with England and France brought about the enactment of the Alien and Sedition Laws, in connection with which the term of residence for naturalization was still further extended to fourteen years. In 1802, however, on the recommendation of Jefferson himself, Congress again fixed the term at five years, where it was destined to remain. In addition to requiring a short duration of residence the law facilitated the acquisition of citizenship by prescribing a quick and easy procedure for acquiring naturalization papers. Any court having a seal could issue the papers, and in some courts the only real requisite came to be the payment of a small fee. The applicant's claim that he had been five years in the country had to be confirmed by witnesses, but many men lived by swearing, for a small payment, to any applicant's statement with regard to his length of residence. Some courts accepted the oath of any person who was present, so that, mild as they were, the provisions of the law were practically unenforced. The Marine Court of New York was a notorious offender in this field, and on the days preceding an election it

was sometimes surrounded by crowds of aliens so large that many could not secure admission.⁴¹ It was generally believed that fully one-sixth of those naturalized previous to the election of 1836 obtained their papers by fraud.⁴² It was about this time that the "Native American" movement began, which was followed by the organization of the Know Nothing party. In 1838 Congress received memorials from New York City, Boston, and sundry counties and towns in New York and Massachusetts, where immigrants were beginning to play a part in local politics, praying for an extension of the time for naturalization and greater stringency in enforcing the law; but nothing came of it all, beyond the appointment of a committee to investigate conditions. Danger from the admission of aliens to the full rights of citizenship seemed remote, and any measure was deprecated that would discourage their coming. During the following twenty years, before all important elections candidates were expected to declare their opinions in regard to granting the suffrage to men of foreign birth, but there was no desire in any quarter to impose real restrictions on immigration except such as would exclude criminals and paupers.

Efforts of the national government to exclude even undesirable persons were half-hearted and ineffective; while on the other hand our ministers abroad were time and again empowered and instructed to try through negotiations to remove the obstacles to immigration that were imposed by the legislation of certain countries of Europe.⁴³ Indeed, it was gravely doubted until nearly the end of the period whether Congress had the power to regulate immigration. A long discussion of this question with no convincing conclusion was presented in the report of a House committee of the Thirty-fourth Congress. The decisions of important courts were conflicting; and public opinion, as well as political leaders, were willing to leave the matter in abeyance.

In 1856 Senator Adams of Mississippi introduced a bill to prohibit ship captains from bringing to this country any alien

⁴¹ 25th Cong., 2d sess., *House Report 1040*, pp. 114 ff.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁴³ *Niles' Register*, LXV, p. 265.

that did not have a certificate of good character from the United States consul; to restrict the suffrage to such as had been here for twenty-one years; and to limit to the circuit or district courts of the United States the granting of naturalization papers. The bill was referred to the Committee on Judiciary, who reported it with the recommendation that it be not passed. Adams' speech in favor of it was listened to with scant toleration, and it was defeated without discussion.⁴⁴ A departure was taken from this passively favorable treatment of immigration in 1864. In that year Senator Sherman, of the Committee on Agriculture, brought in a bill of a very different tenor. Like the Adams Bill it called out very little discussion, but unlike the Adams Bill it was quickly passed by a unanimous vote in both houses. It provided for a Commissioner of Immigration who should collect information with regard to the opportunities this country offered to immigrants, the facilities for transportation, and other matters of interest, and should have this information printed in foreign languages, and distributed abroad; he should in all possible ways encourage and protect aliens in this country and promote their coming. The act provided further for an Immigrant Office in New York and another in New Orleans to be in charge of superintendents, who should give aid to immigrants under the supervision of the commissioner, and should co-operate with the local authorities in their fostering and protecting efforts.⁴⁵ The House amended the bill so as to allow laborers to enter into contract with American employers to refund out of their wages the costs of transportation when these costs were paid by the employers.⁴⁶ In other words, the House amendment aimed to promote immigration by encouraging employers to import "contract labor"; and the encouragement was effective to an unlooked-for degree.⁴⁷

Such were the general influences that promoted the growth of immigration to the United States during the greater part of

⁴⁴ *Congressional Globe*, 34th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 980, 1410 ff.

⁴⁵ *Congressional Globe*, 38th Cong., 1st sess., 865.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Congressional Record*, XVI, 1785.

the nineteenth century. In view of their strength and permanence the question naturally arises: Why did not the movement acquire at an earlier date the dimensions it has attained in recent years?

Many of the obstacles to emigration in the first half of the nineteenth century were of such character that a mere statement of them would be meaningless or misleading, while a satisfactory explanation would require a more detailed description of political and social conditions in Europe than the nature of this paper would admit. It must suffice, therefore, to enumerate briefly the more serious of them.

Prominent among these obstacles would come, of course, the ignorance, on the part of those who would profit most by emigration, of the opportunities America offered and of the way to get here. To most of them America was little more than a name. The agents of land speculators and of transportation companies employed to advertise in Europe the advantages of life across the sea were numerous, active, and unscrupulous; but they could do little in a community where their glowing descriptions were not vouched for by men that were known. It was not until the more enterprising spirits had made trial of the new country and wrote of their success and well-being that their acquaintances among the slow-thinking peasants and prudent artisans gave serious consideration to the advertisements which were copiously furnished them. The information most potent in promoting emigration, then as now, was that conveyed in the letters and descriptions of foreigners already settled here; and at a time when education was limited and means of communication neither cheap nor regular, such information filtered slowly through the masses of the people.

Another serious obstacle to emigration was found in the policy of European governments. While willing enough to deport paupers and criminals, the public authorities looked with strong disapproval on the departure of their other subjects. It was believed in the first half of the century that the power of a nation, both military and industrial, was weakened by emigra-

tion. In the early part of the century most publicists and statesmen agreed with J. B. Say that the departure of a hundred thousand emigrants was equal to the loss of an army of a hundred thousand men.⁴⁸ Even after the middle of the century Wilhelm Roscher could say "our emigrants with all they are and have are lost to the Fatherland." England long tried to prevent the knowledge of the new machinery invented there from reaching other lands by prohibiting the departure of skilled workmen. Though she was the freest country in Europe, it was not till 1824 that her restrictions on emigration were abolished.⁴⁹ "Before that date," says a recent writer, "permission to emigrate had only been accorded as a special favor, except in cases where it was enforced as the penalty of misconduct." In France the right of the individual to emigrate seems to have been recognized from the time of the Revolution, but, as seen above, few Frenchmen cared to take advantage of it. Many German states did not even abolish serfdom till the nineteenth century was well advanced, and nearly all of them had laws restrictive of emigration till a much later date. In Austria and Italy it was prohibited under the severe penalties till the middle of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰

After our Civil War opposition to immigration began to be offered from this side. It is true that the Sherman Act of 1864 was on the statute book for more than a decade, but after 1868 no appropriation was made to carry it out; it became, therefore, virtually a dead letter, and the author himself believed that it had been repealed.⁵¹ The great abuses of assisted immigration that grew up under that law began to be understood, and occasioned a gradual reaction of public opinion with regard to importing foreign laborers. Meantime native laborers, profiting by the experience in discipline and organization gained by their service in the army, were achieving a more effective industrial

⁴⁸ Chandèze, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴⁹ *Statutes of the Realm*, 5 Geo. IV, C. 92.

⁵⁰ Sachs, *L'Italie, ses finances et son développement économique depuis l'unification du royaume*, p. 933.

⁵¹ *Congressional Record*, XVI, 1785.

organization into unions, and could give greater emphasis to their antagonism to aliens as competitors for employment. It is very significant of the growing change of opinion that although three bills to promote immigration were introduced in the House in 1873, and several more in the following year, they all perished in committee.⁵² The time had passed, however, when government action was needed to induce Europeans to come to America.

Of all the obstacles to immigration in the period under review the greatest was the difficulty, danger, and cost of the voyage. This merits discussion in a separate article.

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⁵² *Congressional Record*, XIII, *passim*.